

## THE PACIFIC Commercial Advertiser.

### Account of the Duel between the Monitor and the Merrimac.

Fortress Monroe, Sunday, March 9.

BURNING OF THE CONGRESS—PLAYERS FOR THE COMING OF THE MONITOR—SHE APPEARS.

Taking up the narrative at the conclusion of my dispatch last evening, I will say that at about 5 o'clock in the evening the Congress, as New York News, was set on fire by rebels, [?] and in a short time was a pyramid of flame—a spectacle at once splendid beyond description, and well calculated to fill the eyes of the patriotic people. She continued to burn for hours, witnessed by the whole country around. Gen. Wool made every preparation in view of the probability of a land attack, either on Camp Hamilton or Camp Butler, at Newport News. The Merrimac was still anchored midway between the fortress and the latter place, and arrangements were made to relieve her at the ensuing flood tide, which would be about midnight. Arrangements were made, likewise, in case the Merrimac or any of the rebel boats should pay us a visit or attempt to go out during the night, to give them a proper reception. During the day, while the bloody scenes on the Cumberland and Congress were in progress, the prayer of all hearts was that the Monitor (the Ericsson, rather, as everybody persists in calling her—the only name intelligible here) would come. As if in answer to their prayer, in company with the *Carrick* and *Sarkis*, about 10 1/2 o'clock, she entered the Roads, with a modest little denoting the terrible thing she really was. The satisfaction with which her arrival was hailed may be imagined. The night was dark, and the moon came 12 hours sooner. Preparations were immediately made for placing her in condition for the terrible contest which, untried, and an experiment as she was, she would have to engage in within the next few hours. The morning of the 9th, the Congress, whose flames illumined the Roads and Bay, blew up. The concussion shook the earth like an earthquake. The glare from an instant became as light as day. The gloom that followed seemed an appropriate closing scene to the work of carnage. Beyond unsuccessful efforts to release the Merrimac by a number of tugs, nothing else of moment occurred during the night.

#### THE MONITOR AND THE MERRIMAC.

At early dawn this morning, the Merrimac, *Janetown*, *Yorktown*, and a number of other iron-clad vessels, were seen in the Roads, apparently waiting for the haze and smoke to lift before resuming the contest. The Monitor had taken her station to the left and in advance of the Merrimac, and on the right in the neighborhood of the frigates. Shortly after 8 o'clock the Merrimac began to move up towards the Merrimac, about three miles distant. Her path lay across the bows of the Monitor, whose presence or real existence she was not then aware of. When within about a mile, the ball was opened by the Monitor firing a shot, which struck the side of the iron-clad monster, the Merrimac at the same time slackening her speed. Her intention was to pass the Monitor directly for the Merrimac, and serve her as she had served the Cumberland and Congress. But suddenly she found a lion in her path. The firing was kept up for some time at the distance of about one mile, when the Monitor began to move towards her antagonist, delivering her fire deliberately and with precision. The Merrimac six times her size, and with an armament equally out of proportion, awaited her at rest. At a distance of a quarter of a mile or less, both opened their terrible batteries—the Merrimac firing much the most often of course. It was the first trial of an experiment in a fearful ordeal. The scene was witnessed by those who crowded the ramparts and lined the docks with almost breathless interest. It would not have disappointed many at that moment had it become apparent that the untried Monitor was unequal to the contest. By this time the two iron-clad combatants seemed to touch, fighting at close quarters, delivering their shots seemingly into the muzzles of each other's guns. But so far from being unequal to her adversary, the Monitor moved forward, planting her shots where she would. The contest was so hot that for a time the smoke obscured both the Monitor and the Merrimac. As if realizing that she had found at least her match if not her superior, the Merrimac drew off toward Craney Island, the Monitor pursuing, and delivering her shot with the same deliberation which had characterized her movements from the outset. After keeping up the pursuit for half an hour, the Monitor returned to the Merrimac, and should have mentioned that shortly after this engagement commenced one of the rebel gunboats, apparently the *Yorktown*, steamed out, and boldly engaged the Monitor, but she did not retreat but stood her ground. Nothing could exceed the accuracy of the firing on both sides. After keeping up the contest for half an hour at a range of half or three-quarters of a mile, the Monitor began to advance on her antagonist, who waited her with apparent confidence. Delivering her fire with deliberation and unerring precision the Monitor went straight ahead and at full speed for the Merrimac, and the men on both boats, if they had not been hidden by the iron covering might have engaged in a hand-to-hand fight. Now followed one of the most remarkable and exciting scenes ever witnessed in naval warfare. The vessels touched, and delivering their broadsides simultaneously, the shot crashed upon the sides of both, either glancing off and falling into the water, or crumbling into atoms. As if determined that the combat should have an end, the Monitor moved round the Merrimac at a distance of only a few yards, plunging her shots into her sides. With well-directed aim she planted one into her hull below her iron coating, and below her gun line. The ship began to move, and she was seen to be sinking. After lying for a short time near the shore the Merrimac slowly rounded out, and turned her prow toward the place she was seen in the morning, where the other rebel boats were assembled. The Merrimac was gathered around her like the backers of a whipped bull. At this time it was the general opinion of those who had the best means for observing that the Merrimac had sunk at least two feet, and that she was fast going down. Her deck was thronged with her crew. She gave no sign of steam or smoke. Small boats put off from her, and tug boats came to her side as if to render assistance. As soon as arrangements could be made for doing so, the boats took her in tow, and about three-quarters past 12, the Merrimac, the *Yorktown*, the *Janetown* and the other rebel craft, either towing or pulling the former, might be seen, constituting a mournful procession, as they passed into the distant distance under Craney Island. Thus ended probably the most remarkable naval engagement on record; certainly the first between two iron-clad antagonists.

#### THE LOSS OF LIFE—REMARKS ON THE FIGHT.

The timely appearance of the Monitor was the salvation of the Merrimac, and probably most of the shipping in the Roads, and perhaps other property beside. Had she come a day sooner, she would have saved two of the noblest frigates in the service and hundreds of lives. The loss of life it is impossible to give. On the Cumberland it is believed to be about 150; none of the officers were lost. On the Congress, Capt. Smith, it is probably about the same, and doubtless the presence of the Monitor, when she struck her, was sudden and wholly unexpected. The Monitor was handled with unsurpassed skill, decision and coolness, for which all praise should be given her officers. She has come up to the expectations that were formed of her, and has proved herself impragable to the heaviest shot at close quarters. Lieut. Worden, who handled the Monitor so skillfully, is in Washington, in the hands of a surgeon. He was in the pilot boat of the Monitor when the Merrimac directed a whole broadside at it, and received his injuries from the minute fragments of powder which were driven through the lookout holes. Lieut. Worden was stunned by the concussion, and was carried away. On recovering he asked, "Have I missed the Merrimac?" The reply was, "Yes, and she missed the Merrimac." To this he answered, "I don't care what becomes of her, but I care for the Merrimac." The injuries of Lieut. Worden are not supposed to be dangerous. On examining the Monitor after the engagement, though shell after shell had exploded on her decks and solid shot struck her, yet no perceptible damage had been done to the vessel, nor injury to the crew, with the exception already mentioned. One of the crew of the Monitor was asked how the boys felt during the engagement. He replied, "Oh first rate; the shot and shell from the Merrimac sounded like hailstones on our decks." Captain Van Brunt and the crew of the Merrimac deserve great praise for their noble conduct in the two days' engagements. The gunboat *Whitehall*, Capt. W. Baulin, participated in both engagements, and fired 200 30-pounder shells. The 30-pounder Parrott guns did great execution, and one of the shells from the latter struck the trunion, the cap square of one of the guns making a dent of about one-quarter of an inch; but singular to relate, not a man was hurt by the burst of the shell. The *Whitehall* is completely riddled. On the doors and bulwarks brains and blood, bones and hair are scattered around. The crew of the *Whitehall* behaved most admirably, and were repaid and paid as another victim of a cheer and the fire returned. Captain Baulin says he cannot speak to high in the praise of the Monitor. He asserts the Merrimac will never come out again as long as the Monitor is in this harbor. On the first day the gunboat *Dragon*, with her 32 pound Parrott gun, fired, silenced the rebel steamer *Yorktown*, compelling the rebels to haul her up in a leaking condition. The U. S. gunboat *Zouave* (one gun) was in the first of the engagement on Saturday, and continued actively employed against the Merrimac until the latter retreated on Sunday noon. She received three shots from the rebels—one of them carried away her stern post and one of the fans of her propeller. The *Zouave* in the engagement off Newport News towed the frigate *Congress* ashore, in order that she might not fall a prize to the rebels in this perilous duty being within easy range of the Merrimac, she was the recipient of a heavy fire from the latter vessel. The naval storehouse *Brandywine* has been towed from the Point to Baltimore, as a measure of safety in case the Merrimac should appear again.

#### THE INCIDENTS OF THE ENGAGEMENT.

Eye-witnesses of this most extraordinary naval engagement on record, say: At 8 o'clock on Sunday morning the Merrimac accompanied by the *Janetown* and *Yorktown*, and steamtugs came in sight, headed for the Merrimac. A shot from the Monitor, which steamed up to meet the Merrimac, surprised her and she seemed to start back as if finding an unwelcome assailant. From half past eight till ten minutes past twelve the battle raged—the *Pigeon* Point and *Sally's* Point batteries joined the rebel fleet in the assault on the Monitor and Merrimac, which was assisted by the gunboat *Whitehall*, once a ferry-boat, and one or two other vessels. The interest of the contest centered in the struggle between the two iron-clad vessels, as the rebel wooden boats kept their distance, and only manifested themselves by an occasional shell, and the Merrimac's broadsides glanced off harmlessly from the Merrimac's mailed planks. The Monitor for nearly four hours steamed round and round the Merrimac, sometimes at a distance of half a mile, sometimes touching her, constantly hammering her with immense shot from her two guns. The effort was to hit her stern, which was believed to be the heel of the Achilles; but the Merrimac, aware of this, kept turning, also trying to strike the Monitor with her bows. Once only the Monitor got into position behind the Merrimac, but unfortunately, the current didn't stop rotating at the right moment, and the shot missed her work. In the course of the fight the Monitor discharged from 30 to 40 shells, and the Merrimac, flying as some officers think, a black flag, some 200. At length the Merrimac retired with her consort. Her stern seemed to observers to sink lower in the water than when she came out. She was towed off by the tugs, and some say that her crew or a portion of them were seen upon her roof, as if afraid she would go down. Lieut. 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